

News Release

For Immediate Release

Governor, state leaders endorse results of sentencing study

INDIANAPOLIS (December 15, 2010) – Governor Mitch Daniels today endorsed recommendations from the first comprehensive review of Indiana’s criminal code and sentencing policies in more than 30 years and said the state will improve public safety and security for Hoosiers by concentrating Department of Correction resources on the state’s most violent criminals and by taking a new and smarter approach to those who commit lesser offenses.

“Every significant aspect of law enforcement and criminal justice has been brought together in this project,” said Daniels. “We have hoped for a package of changes that will bring more certain and firm punishments to the worst offenders in Indiana, more sensible, smarter incarceration for those who pose much less of a danger to Hoosiers and, as a byproduct of that, grace to taxpayers in the form of lower costs in the years ahead. I am thrilled to say that this group has brought about such a product and I am happy to pass it on to the General Assembly with my strongest endorsement.”

In addition, the governor announced the state has reached an agreement with The GEO Group, Inc. to build a 512-bed high security annex to the New Castle Correctional Facility. GEO will finance and operate the facility for maximum security prisoners contiguous to the existing prison.

Earlier this year, the governor, Chief Justice Randall Shepard, Attorney General Greg Zoeller and legislative leaders sought the review in partnership with the Pew Center on the States and the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center. The review found that Indiana’s prison population grew by more than 40 percent, or around 8,000 offenders, in the last 10 years—three times faster than any neighboring state—while the state’s crime rate declined slightly. The prison population growth occurred primarily because more property and drug offenders were sentenced to prison.

The Indiana Department of Correction has found ways to house that growing population without building any new prisons since 2002. Without action, the population is projected to grow from approximately 29,000 today to nearly 35,000 in 2017.

The CSG Justice Center and Pew report will be released on Thursday and will include three proposed categories of policy changes:

- Improve proportionality in sentencing and ensure prison space for the worst offenders by creating a more precise set of drug and theft sentencing laws and providing judges with more sentencing options for individuals who commit the least serious felony offenses.
- Strengthen community supervision by focusing resources on high-risk offenders and creating incentives for supervision agencies to coordinate better with one another.
- Reduce recidivism and bolster public safety by increasing access to community-based substance abuse and mental health treatment and enabling probation officers to respond with more effective, swift and certain sanctions.

Such changes would avoid spending \$1.2 billion (\$630 million in construction costs and \$571 million in operating costs) associated with the state's prison population. The plan includes an additional \$37.6 million in savings from food, medical and other expenses that vary because of the size of the prison population.

The recommendations also require a reinvestment of \$27 million over the next six years to strengthen probation, provide incentive funding for counties to improve outcomes for people on probation and parole, and ensure greater access to behavioral health treatment for those on supervision.

"State leaders have produced a bipartisan, data-driven policy framework that gives Indiana a real chance to achieve needed cost savings, while protecting public safety and holding offenders accountable," said Richard Jerome, manager, Pew's Public Safety Performance Project.

The recommendations and the CSG Justice Center/Pew report will be presented Thursday to the Criminal Code Evaluation Commission. The work over the past several months included extensive consultations with local government officials and community leaders and analysis by national experts. A 14-member steering committee was appointed that included legislators, judges, state leaders, law enforcement professionals, prosecutors and public defenders.

Construction at New Castle is expected to be completed by February 1, 2012, with a total capacity of 3,196 beds. GEO will assume the financial risk as well as the risk of full utilization of cells in the future. The daily cost is \$37 per bed versus \$42 per bed had the state financed and operated the facility without partnering with a private entity.

Charts and more information from today's presentation can be found at the following links:

<http://www.in.gov/gov/files/Press/121510boards.pdf>

<http://www.in.gov/gov/files/Press/121510factsheet.pdf>

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